



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

That is why the Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21st-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year. And it protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice (such as Wi-Fi-only “mobile” broadband, which don’t help consumers who lack home broadband or aren’t otherwise near a Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop).

At the same time, I am deeply committed to ensuring that the Commission fulfills its obligation to be a responsible steward of the Universal Service Fund. It is critical to strengthen the Lifeline program’s efficacy and integrity by reducing the waste, fraud, and abuse that has run rampant in this program for the better part of a decade. For example, in response to a request for an investigation initiated by Senators Claire McCaskill and Rob Portman, the Government Accountability Office discovered 1,234,929 Lifeline subscribers who apparently were not eligible to participate in the program as well as 6,378 individuals who apparently enrolled or recertified after being reported as deceased. That limited sample alone constituted more than \$137 million in abuse each year. That’s money that could be better spent building out broadband in low-income neighborhoods and making broadband more affordable for low-income families and veterans living in rural America, in territories like Puerto Rico, and on Tribal lands.

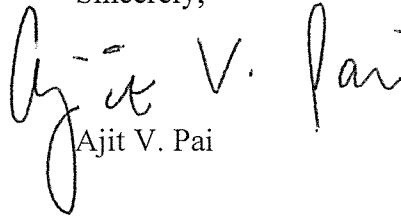
To address this, in a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* accompanying the *Order*, the Commission sought comment on a wide variety of measures to improve the administration of the Lifeline program—from re-empowering state commissions to police Lifeline carriers to partnering with states to stand up the National Verifier, from improving program audits to adopting a self-enforcing budget. We are currently reviewing the record that has been compiled in response to the *Notice* to determine the best path forward, and your letter has been added to that record. The Lifeline program’s goal is—or should be—to empower consumers, not

companies. And that will be our lodestar as we move forward to ensure that unscrupulous companies stop abusing this important program.

I likewise agree with you on the importance of universal service programs in Puerto Rico. That's why the agency waived Lifeline's recertification and non-usage rules for Puerto Rican residents in the hurricane's aftermath—to ensure that subscribers would not lose their Lifeline service at a time when they needed it most. And that's why the Commission has taken several steps to restore network facilities on the island. Just this past May, the Commission adopted my proposal to create the Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund, in order to accelerate the restoration of communications networks damaged and destroyed on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands during the 2017 hurricane season. In the near term, the order provides more than \$64.2 million in additional funding this year to make sure network recovery continues in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In the accompanying notice, we look toward the long term and propose providing \$890 million in funding to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to enhance connectivity and help future-proof the territories' networks. Moving forward with the efforts outlined in the notice will help ensure that funding is fiscally responsible and enables as many people as possible in the territories to benefit from fixed and mobile communications. And these networks will be rebuilt by facilities-based carriers who are committed to investing in the territories (several of whom I visited shortly after Hurricanes Irma and Maria), not wireless resellers.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part, followed by "V." and "Pai".

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

That is why the Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21st-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year. And it protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice (such as Wi-Fi-only “mobile” broadband, which don’t help consumers who lack home broadband or aren’t otherwise near a Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop).

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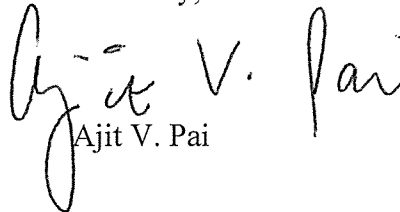
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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Senate
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

That is why the Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21st-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year. And it protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice (such as Wi-Fi-only “mobile” broadband, which don’t help consumers who lack home broadband or aren’t otherwise near a Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop).

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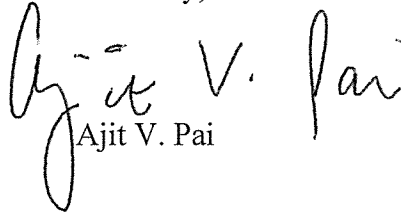
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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
United States Senate
B40B Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harris:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

That is why the Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21st-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year. And it protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice (such as Wi-Fi-only “mobile” broadband, which don’t help consumers who lack home broadband or aren’t otherwise near a Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop).

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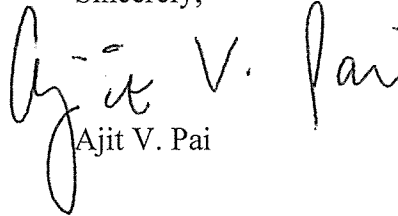
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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

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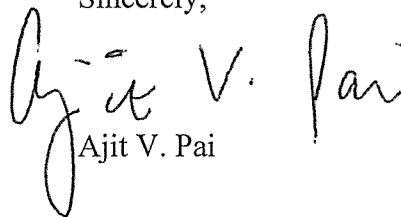
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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

That is why the Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21st-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year. And it protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice (such as Wi-Fi-only “mobile” broadband, which don’t help consumers who lack home broadband or aren’t otherwise near a Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop).

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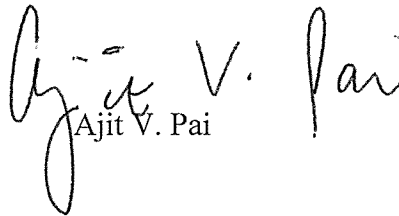
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

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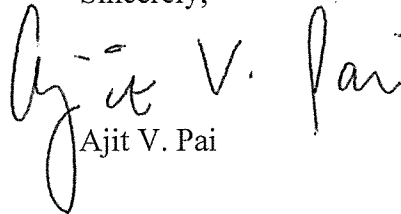
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Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

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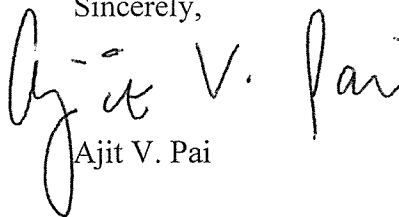
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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part.

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

Thank you for your letter arguing that the most vulnerable people in our country must have access to affordable communications. I agree with you. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that.

That is why the Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21st-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year. And it protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice (such as Wi-Fi-only “mobile” broadband, which don’t help consumers who lack home broadband or aren’t otherwise near a Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop).

At the same time, I am deeply committed to ensuring that the Commission fulfills its obligation to be a responsible steward of the Universal Service Fund. It is critical to strengthen the Lifeline program’s efficacy and integrity by reducing the waste, fraud, and abuse that has run rampant in this program for the better part of a decade. For example, in response to a request for an investigation initiated by Senators Claire McCaskill and Rob Portman, the Government Accountability Office discovered 1,234,929 Lifeline subscribers who apparently were not eligible to participate in the program as well as 6,378 individuals who apparently enrolled or recertified after being reported as deceased. That limited sample alone constituted more than \$137 million in abuse each year. That’s money that could be better spent building out broadband in low-income neighborhoods and making broadband more affordable for low-income families and veterans living in rural America, in territories like Puerto Rico, and on Tribal lands.

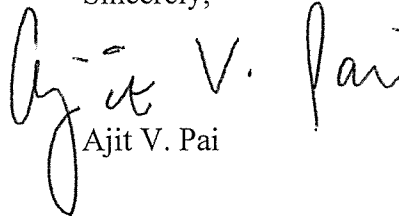
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

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United States Senate
359 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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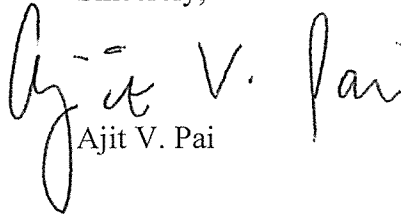
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